

BACHELOR THESIS

KEYWORDS

- Brand perception and performance
- AI-washing/-booing
- Difference-in-differences
- YouGov BrandIndex

TOPIC: WHAT HAPPENED TO MY BRAND PERCEPTION?

Brands operate in an environment where public opinion can shift rapidly following news coverage, social media debates, or corporate actions. Product recalls, executive statements, ethical scandals, or activist campaigns can quickly reshape how consumers perceive and engage with brands. Recently, developments in artificial intelligence (AI)—such as the launch of new AI products, controversies around AI ethics, or firm-level adoption announcements—have emerged as additional shocks that can influence brand perception and market reactions.

This bachelor thesis examines how major public and AI-related events affect consumer perceptions of brands using YouGov BrandIndex data from the U.S. market. Students will first identify relevant events such as AI related product launches, failures (AI-booing) and fake statements (AI-washing), regulatory interventions, CEO statements, or public controversies. Then they will apply a difference-in-differences design to estimate their impact on key brand metrics including buzz, purchase intent, and brand impression.

The project provides hands-on experience with large-scale brand tracking data and causal inference methods. It contributes to a broader understanding of how AI-related shocks and other public events shape brand perception and consumer response in a rapidly evolving marketplace.

Example Theses in progress:

- Driven Apart: Political shocks and brand polarization in the automotive industry
- The analysis of GM Cruise accident on brand perception

Examples of events yet to be explored:

- 23andMe data leak
- Backlash of Levis and Lalaland.ai partnership
- Further political polarization examples, AI-booing/-washing events, and scandals or positive shocks, such as successful drug experiment on a controversial issue

What you need to have to apply:

- Curiosity and interest in digital marketing
- Interest in empirical research
- Basic statistics
- Willingness to use R (or Python) for analysis, with supervisor support

LITERATURE & LINKS

- Ozturkcan, S., & Bozdağ, A. A. (2025). Responsible AI in marketing: AI booing and AI washing cycle of AI mistrust. *International Journal of Market Research*, 14707853251379285.
- Goldfarb, A., Tucker, C., & Wang, Y. (2022). Conducting research in marketing with quasi-experiments. *Journal of Marketing*, 86(3), 1-20.
- Cao, J., Jiang, H., Ren, X., & Shi, J. (2024). Consumers' risk perception, market demand, and firm innovation: Evidence from China. *Plos one*, 19(5), e0301802.
- Xie, Q., Muralidharan, S., Edwards, S. M., & La Ferle, C. (2023). Unlocking the power of non-fungible token (NFT) marketing: how NFT perceptions foster brand loyalty and purchase intention among millennials and gen-Z. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 23(4), 356-373.

SUPERVISOR

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HOW TO APPLY

You can apply for this topic by filling in the **application form** (available [here](#)) and sending it to ugurcan.duendar@wu.ac.at